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★ Translation from an article in the Marathi Weekly Swarajya, Republic Day Industrial supplement published on 21—1—1961, from Bombay and Poona simultaneously. ★

Industrialist from a Hotel Boy,

(G. D. Naidu, "Gopal Bagh", Coimbatore.)

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Industrialist from a Hotel Boy.

Mr. G. D. Naidu of Coimbatore is an unique and a rare personality. At present he is 68, and within this span of his life he has done and achieved remarkable things. Several booklets have been written about him in Tamil and English. Inspite of this, he is very little known or unknown to the northerners and to us in Maharashtra. On the contrary he is famous in Germany, England and United States. The good old ever young engineer of India, Bharat Ratna Dr. M. Visvesvaraya and the world famous Raman Effect Nobel Laureate Dr. C. V. Raman, some ministers at the centre, Sir Arthur Hope, former Governor of Madras

and many foreigners highly esteem the capabilities of Mr. Naidu and they have all the praises for him.

Shri Naidu by his hard labour and perseverance has ingeniously invented many useful things. His inventions and discoveries were acclaimed and were praised abroad in Industrial countries like Germany, U. K. and United States where the technicalities are well advanced. People in Kashi don't dip in Ganges daily, but millions from outside come to this city for the Holy dip. Similarly three decades ago his inventions went un-noticed and uncared on the very soil he was born. He was praised by the Germans and the English for his ingenious gadgets. An affectionate mother's (India) pat on the back would have kindled more inspiration in him. Fortunately he has not turned his inventions into refugees to other countries for personal benefits. On the contrary he has not even taken any patent for many of his discoveries and inventions. From all this the readers may be under the impression that Shri G. D. Naidu might be

a scientist or an engineer. But it is not so and here he has outwitted even the most skilled engineers. As a matter of fact he had very little learning to his credit in his school days. Inspite of this drawback he has invented an electric razor, invented gadgets in automobile engineering. He made remarkably successful experiments in Botany and Agriculture and improved methods in yielding more, which will put men in that field and the figure hungry statisticians to shame. He is proficient in medicine too and has been successfully administering medicines for some incurable diseases.

Doraiswamy Naidu was born in Kalangal in Coimbatore district. Due to the sad demise of his mother in his early childhood he was under the care of Mr. Ramaswamy Naidu, maternal uncle of his father. Small Doraiswamy even though he learned Tamil, did not like the prison like atmosphere of the olden day schools. He was very mischievous and literally he threw mud in the eyes of his teachers as a result of which he was packed back to

his father. Here also for mere fun he set fire to a hay cart. The villagers were really scared of him. Once he casually saw a wrapper of Parke-Davies Co., containing headache pills. He took agency for selling these headache pills to the villagers and sold to the needy at a cheaper rate. Thus he collected about Rs. 800/-. From the very childhood he had a tremendous hatred for injustice. He forced the land owners to pay legitimate wages to the labourers. He once burnt the house of an atrocious tyrant in the village. He also publicly beat the village barber for his misbehaviour. From this incidence he made up his mind not to go to a barber. From this determination he was inclined to invent an electric razor, three decades ago. Shri Naidu studied Ramayanam, Mahabharatham, Sangam literature, Sillappadigaram, Thirukural etc.

At the age of 20, he left his native village for good and came to Coimbatore when he started an independent career as a hotel boy at Rs. 3/-. At that time nobody in Coimbatore might have dreamt that this

very hotel boy in course of time would become an industrialist not only of Coimbatore but in the whole of south. At present he is a VIP of the south and a gem of Coimbatore. From his earlier younger days, young Doraiswamy was very much inquisitive about machines and gadgets and he used to look at them carefully. Rather this was his hobby. The steam railway engine and the automobile have literally mesmerized him. After serving as a hotel boy for sometime he earned about 400 rupees. He was ambitious of having an autocycle. He longed to learn the mechanism of the same. He expressed his desire to Mr. Lancashire, the then Settlement Officer of Coimbatore. The Englishman realising young Doraiswamy's thirst for mechanical knowledge parted with his autocycle to Naidu. After acquiring the machine Naidu kept himself very busy in dismantling every part and refitting the same in the proper place. This operation was repeated several times till he became very familiar with each and every part of the autocycle and the mechanism. Ever ambitious Naidu took some money on loan

and invested the same in the share market. Sometimes he gained and many times he lost. Later he served in a ginning factory. After some time with the help of an investor he purchased a ginning factory for Rs. 17,000/- Those were the days of the first world war and he did brisk business. He earned 1.5 lakh of rupees by the end of the war. With this he embarked on the share business at Bombay. Lady luck did not smile upon him and he returned frustrated after 18 months in Bombay. By this time he had built up a good reputation in the business circle for his honesty and integrity. He approached Sir Robert Stanes, the owner of tea and rubber plantations for a job of a mechanic. Sir Stanes knew well the capabilities of Mr. Naidu and he did not wish to see the talents of Naidu go wasted. So he gave him a loan of Rs. 4,000/- and asked him to start a business of his own. With this impetus and with a similar loan from other friends Naidu collected an other Rs. 4.000/- and entered the automobile business in which he became one of the pioneers not only in the south but in whole of India.

In 1920 he started his bus service from Pollachi to Palani a distance of 40 miles. At that time he alone was the driver, cleaner, conductor and owner of the bus. With such a meagre start, during the period of 1930-40 he had a fleet of 200 buses having the biggest transport company in India then. In those days his buses were plying to Nilgiris, Madura and several places in Malabar and Cochin. Daily his buses covered a distance of 1500 miles carrying 10,000 passengers. He had more than thousand workers employed in his enterprise and every month he paid Rs. 17,000 by way of salaries to his employees. His business administration was similar in line with the American and British transport companies. He successfully integrated all the other bus transport services into one amalgamated Co., known as United Motor Service in 1933. He always cared for the comforts of his passengers. Many times he used to disguise himself like Harun al Rashid to see personally how his staff behaved with the passengers. He tried many experiments on the capabilities of his employees. At the

same time he tried his level best to help the workers and their welfare. He did appreciate the capabilities of his workers and deserving workers were properly rewarded. He never behaved as a boss, on the contrary he himself served as one of the inmates of the concern. Because of his courteous behaviour and very congenial atmosphere there is not a single instance of strike or any other trouble in his vast expanding industrial concerns during the last 40 years. Today he is the pioneer and leader of the transport system of private companies in India. He brought to notice the errors of others and got them corrected and similarly he maintains a file to record his own blunders!

In 1932 Shri Naidu had been to Germany and England. Each time he went for a shave he had to shell out one or two shillings or marks which was very costly from an Indian point of view. At that time his knowledge of English or Deutch was not sufficient to converse with the people. In order to shave by self method he tried several razors unsuccessfully. He was

good mechanic himself. He himself invented an electric razor which would work on dry cell battery. He tried this razor on himself and succeeded in having a good shave. For this razor he prepared a small motor in his workshop. Later he succeeded in preparing a tiny motor and got a patent for this in Germany. He deviced a handle for the razor in Switzerland. For packing this he prepared card-board boxes from India. This Indian razor went by a commercial name as "Rasant Electric Razor". In 1935 when he went to England for the second time he carried 10,000 Rasant razors prepared in India from his workshop. In those days the blade of the razor was as thin as 1/200th of an inch. Also at the same time he had to enter into a rival competition with an English "Telerazor". Inspite of this he sold 7,500 pieces of his Rasants just as hot cakes in the very British capital of London for 25 shillings each! In India he sold over 1,000 pieces of his razor for Rs. 9/- each. An American Industrialist Victor, offered 3,000 dollars a month as salary to produce the razor in his workshop.

Another Industrialist was prepared to purchase the rights of the invention for 3 lakhs of dollars. Where as one industrialist asked him to venture in a joint enterprise with him in the United States. But the patriotic son of India remained firm and did not fall a prey to the huge baits of thousands of dollars. He wanted the razors to be manufactured in India alone. Similar to Rasant he invented several other small gadgets which were very useful. He deviced an improvement in the radiators of automobiles by which the vehicle would require water only after hundreds of miles of run. He prepared machines for manufacturing razors and also a vibrating machine in 1936.

Shri Naidu is an excellent photographer. He deviced a means in his camera by which the size of the desired view remained the desired one even if the cameramen took the snap either from near or remote. He invented a machine which would count the votes. Apart from these he deviced many improvements in the automobiles. His U. M. S. Radio Factory manufactures cheaper

radio sets a cherished dream of our leaders. In his factory they are using printed circuits instead of old wiring circuits. His advices are sought by even foreign industrialists and many a time they have realised that the advices of Naidu were worth many thousands of dollars. If Shri Naidu would have been an inventor, discoverer or a gadget improver of any other country his fame would have been sky-rocketed and he would have become a national figure. Awards and titles would have been at his feet. His services were recognised very late that too only in the south. Unfortunately in our country nobody cared to appreciate his inventions and discoveries and improvements he had done in the automobile engineering. Earlier it has already been mentioned that Shri Naidu is an ardent photographer. He has completely photographed the funeral of late H. M. King George V. He also has a complete movie of an inaugural function of an exhibition by the Duke of Windsor. Naidu not only captured persons like Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini of Italy in his camera but also got their autographs on

their photographs. One American gentleman offered 10,000 dollars for the autographed photo of the Fuhrer, but Naidu politely declined the offer. Naidu has some very rare pictures in his collection. At present his U. M. S industrial concerns turn out motor radiators, printed circuit radios, type-writer-ribbon, Carbon paper, rubber stamps, pads, razor blades, repairs and maintenance of diesel engines, machine tools, movie projectors, dial gauges, tower clocks, electric motors, bus body building, photographic materials etc.

In 1939 Naidu went to the United States to see an Industrial exhibition. During his foreign tours he always used to acquire as much knowledge as possible. In some of the exhibitions he visited, he took the volunteers by surprise when he asked them intricate mechanical questions which were later answered by the summoning of experts. At the age of 47, he joined as a technical student in U. S. He simply gobbled the technical knowledge he acquired even at this age. He took similar technical training from 20 various technical schools in U. S.

At the age of 62 he joined the Perkin's technical school in England. Similarly he joined short term courses in Germany and Austria during his tours. He is a Member of Engineering Societies of England and United States where Membership is usually given only to highly qualified Engineers. He has got a big collection of books in his library in which varieties of books are added from time to time. Many times just to find time to read these books without any interruption, he travels long distances by trains!

He has 18,000 files in his collection of technical data on engineering problems. He has very liberally donated for the cause of education. His philanthropic deeds are well known in the south. During the times of war he helped the then Government by purchasing Government war loans. He helped liberally for the uplift of the workers. He donated liberally to backward and poor classes for their uplift. At present in some of the southern universities and technical institutes, his scholarships are given to deserving students. He started the

Sir Arthur Hope Technological College in Coimbatore and it was inaugurated by the Governor Hope himself. Mr. Naidu was the first Principal and Director of the Institute. The Government did not render any help. On the contrary he was intermittently harassed by the authorities under one or other pretext. Because of his liberal donations to institutes and other philonthropical deeds, the income tax blood-sucking department woke up from its sleep! They thought that when a man can afford to give lakhs in donations his income must run into crores. For two years he was levied an income tax of Rs. 28 lakhs. Inspite of all his troubles and harassments from the I. T. bureaucrats he kept a very cool mind. This dispute went to the court of law. Many dignitories and friends who are in high government positions tried to intervene in the matter. In such troubled waters Shri Naidu went on donating and distributed government bonds to workers and students! At last the whole deal was settled at Rs. 14 lakhs. From 1947 to 1957 during the post independent stage he was denied import licence and manufacturing

licence by the government. Naidu's bold enterprises were often interrupted instead of he being helped by the government. The short-term technological courses advocated by him were opposed by the government. In spite of their opposition he turned out hundreds of motor mechanics, and radio technicians who are successfully employed elsewhere. He received certificates, merit awards and gold medals for his best exhibits in foreign countries especially in Germany, England and Switzerland.

He improved the yield of fruits and crops by chemical experiments in his own gardens which were appreciated by persons like Sir C. V. Raman and Dr. Visveswarayya. By administering drugs he cured the sufferings of thousands of diabetic and leucorrhoea patients even from abroad. He treats them free of charge.

Really Shri G. D. Naidu himself is an unique Institution and every Indian must be proud of him.